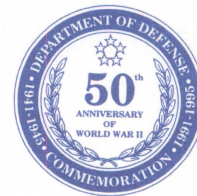




PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000



26 MAY 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, ARMY CASUALTY AND MEMORIAL
AFFAIRS OPERATIONS CENTER
BRANCH HEAD, USMC PERSONNEL AND FAMILY
READINESS DIVISION
DIRECTOR, NAVY CASUALTY BRANCH
CHIEF, AIR FORCE CASUALTY MATTERS DIVISION

SUBJECT: Procedural Guidance – Access to Dover AFB by Families of Casualties

I am enclosing guidance on access to Dover by families of casualties whose remains are processed at the Dover mortuary. We strongly advise and encourage those who lose their loved one to remain at home where the casualty officer, family and friends can provide the best support to them. Nonetheless, there will be those instances where families insist on going to Dover AFB. The attached guidance is to assist casualty officers in counseling the families regarding such a trip to Dover. This guidance applies to the families of military members, DoD civilians, contractors and others whose remains are processed at Dover.

Request that you give wide dissemination of this guidance to your casualty staff and assistance officers. Thank you for your cooperation.

Meg Falk
Director, Office of Family Policy

Attachment:
As stated

cc:
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Human Resources)
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Military Personnel Policy)
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Force Management and Personnel)
Director, Air Force Services



Procedural Guidance: Access to Dover AFB by Families of Casualties

1. The Armed Forces have a strong tradition of support to families and dignified handling of fallen comrades. Although the Military Services strongly recommend the primary next-of-kin (NOK) remain at home after notification of a death, some may elect to travel to Dover Air Force Base. In this event, the Armed Forces will provide a reasonable level of support to the NOK or their designated representative, consistent with available resources and on a not-to-interfere basis with mission operations. Representatives with a military ID have access to the installation, and those without a military ID will be escorted while they are on the installation. If they are on the installation while the aircraft believed to be carrying their loved one or another aircraft carrying remains is scheduled to land, they may view the landing and dignified transfer of remains from a vantage point in view of the arrival area, but will not be allowed to photograph or make a visual recording of the transfer.

The following information should be provided and/or discussed with the primary NOK to assist in making an informed decision on whether they should or should not go to Dover:

- a. Remains of deceased military members often arrive at Dover in a "Believe to Be" status until positively identified by the Armed Forces Medical Examiner. Consequently, there is no way for a NOK to know with certainty whose remains are in the transfer cases being taken from the aircraft. Also, since Dover AFB doesn't have rooms for viewing of remains after preparation, NOK will be unable to view their loved ones at Dover.
- b. Aircraft delivering remains may arrive significantly earlier or later than expected.
- c. Traveling to the closest commercial airports to Dover requires NOK to fly into Philadelphia, PA (1.5 hour drive) or Newark, NJ (2.5 hour drive) or Baltimore Washington International (2.0 hour drive) to reach Dover AFB.
- d. Condition of the remains will determine the duration of NOK stay at Dover while awaiting completion of positive identification, autopsy, embalming and preparation of the remains. NOK could experience significant delays and could spend days at Dover. NOK should be prepared to stay in off-base hotels as on-base quarters are near full occupancy due to primary mission (aircrews and mortuary staff).
- e. There may be a delay in coordinating mortuary and casualty affairs support when NOK is en-route to Dover. Important decisions and details about the

funeral and interment will likely be delayed while family members are traveling.

- f. There is no entitlement for funding NOK travel to Dover to view the transfer of remains from aircraft. Families would be required to fund their travel and other associated expenses.
- g. While family members may desire to escort their loved one's remains, the Services strongly recommend the use of a uniformed escort as experience has shown air carriers and others in the transportation industry respond more immediately to a uniformed presence.
- h. If a family member wishes to accompany the remains along with the escort, they need to be made aware that there is a possibility that the airlines may not be able to accommodate them, depending on number of reservations for the flight and other potential problems.

2. The uncertainty of travel arrangements from the location of the casualty, the possible length of the positive identification process, and the absence of facilities to enable the viewing of remains make Dover Air Force Base the least desirable place for family members to meet their loved one's remains. The Armed Forces' tradition of support to families and dignified handling of fallen comrades is best represented when the support is provided in the local area where the next-of-kin reside or where the remains will be laid to rest.